

# GILLS BRIDGE CREEK REHABILITATION

## overview of the project

Gills Bridge Creek is a small tributary of the Macleay River at Kempsey. Although degraded by the surrounding industrial and urban land uses, it supports a diverse range of ecological values including several threatened species and endangered ecological communities. Kempsey Shire Council have restored and rehabilitated a section of the creek that had received limited attention during previous restoration work along the creek. Weed control, bush regeneration and new plantings have enhanced key habitat values within the riparian corridor through strategic planting of koala food trees and installation of nest boxes.



Primary school students planted 350 native tubestock.

## how the project was carried out

Professional bush regenerators were engaged to complete most of the bush regeneration works using a variety of methods including spraying, cut and paint techniques, drilling and injection, and hand removal. To maintain the genetic integrity of the riparian corridor, the majority of the tubestock plants were grown at the South Kempsey Community Nursery from seed collected within the riparian zone, while the remaining plants were sourced from local nurseries using locally collected seed stock.



School students are keen to continue improvements

The project involved enhancement of habitat for specific fauna, including koalas, which have previously been recorded within the Gills Bridge Creek riparian zone. Koala food trees

were propagated at the community nursery from locally collected seed and 85 koala food trees from three species were planted across the site.

The project area contains few natural tree hollows and so seven nest boxes were installed to enhance fauna habitat, especially for threatened species. Two boxes were designed for squirrel gliders, two for possums or black cockatoos, and three for small parrots. All the nest boxes were dual purpose boxes with micro-bat roosts constructed underneath the base of the nest box.

50 local primary school students planted 350 native tubestock during a Council organised planting day. Contractors planted 300 additional tubestock on a site that was unsuitable for children to access.

## outcomes now and in the future

The project has added significant value to the previous three year Trust funded project that carried out rehabilitation in other areas of the catchment. A total of 5860 m<sup>2</sup> of degraded habitat has been revegetated along Gills Bridge Creek.

The project has forged strong partnerships between Kempsey Council and Macleay Landcare, South Kempsey Community Nursery and the local schools. These partnerships allowed the wider community to become involved in the rehabilitation project by engaging local school students to grow the plants at the nursery. The schools who participated in the project are interested in continuing with similar activities for other areas of Gills Bridge Creek.

## benefits, challenges & lessons learned

The most difficult site was a steep sloping bank adjacent to the Pacific Highway. Although natural regeneration was beginning to occur, one kilogram of *Lomandra longifolia* seed was soaked for two weeks before being direct sown over the 1080m<sup>2</sup> site to help stabilise the steep slope while regeneration took place.

To avoid reinfestation of the project site, Council has carried out nearly 3,000m<sup>2</sup> of weed control in an adjoining roadside corridor as well as another 6,750m<sup>2</sup> of weed control in an area 500 metres upstream of the project site.

Two major flood events occurred during the course of the project, which resulted in minor delays to the work schedule.